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CIA Mismanages Afghan Rebel Aid

For those who are sick and tired of the Iran-contra arms scandal, here's fair warning: That fiasco should soon be dwarfed by the CIA's incredible mismanagement of the hundreds of millions of dollars Congress has appropriated for Afghanistan's freedom fighters since the Soviet invasion seven years ago.

Our investigation reveals that the Afghan mujaheddin are lucky if they received even 40 percent of the covert funds. Counting matching money from Saudi Arabia, we estimate that the Central Intelligence Agency has spent $3 billion for arms aid to the anti-Soviet guerrillas.

But at least $1.2 billion has been stolen—skimmed off by rapacious arms dealers, crooked CIA agents and corrupt officials along the weapons trail in Egypt, Pakistan and the People's Republic of China. In secret testimony on Capitol Hill, the CIA has claimed that 80 percent of the arms purchased reached the Afghan rebels.

This is preposterous, and the CIA knows it.

After we heard of the monumental mismanagement from CIA sources and others, Dale Van Atta flew to Pakistan to investigate. He drove to Peshawar, once a sleepy British colonial outpost on the northwest frontier, now a sprawling city teeming with Afghan refugees. It is the headquarters of all the mujaheddin organizations and where virtually all the CIA's weapons are supposed to be delivered to the guerrilla recipients.

But Van Atta made an astounding discovery. There is no CIA official in Peshawar to check what the freedom fighters actually receive. And from interviews with mujaheddin sources, it became clear that less than half the weapons bought by the CIA ever make it as far as Peshawar.

Pakistani officials insisted that they would allow closer CIA contact with the mujaheddin, particularly to check on the arms supply line. But they said the CIA has never taken them up on this offer.

In fact, our sources said that CIA officials in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, are forbidden by their superiors to ask the mujaheddin about arms deliveries. The only existing direct contact between the CIA and the mujaheddin fighters in Pakistan is through former Army personnel hired by the CIA to train the Afghans in the use of American Stinger antiaircraft missiles.

Our investigation has revealed that the CIA's Afghan arms supply line is riddled with graft and waste from start to finish, on a scale not seen since the agency's covert programs in Vietnam. The opportunity for corruption is enormous, and the evidence of abuse includes reports of kickbacks made to CIA agents by Pakistanis who have shared in the boodle themselves.

Now, at long last, Rep. William H. Gray III (D-Pa.), chairman of the Budget Committee, has asked the General Accounting Office to follow the CIA's money trail. Gray's action was prompted by a shoestring lobbying outfit, the Federation for American Afghan Action, headed by Andrew Eiva.

Eiva and the FAAA have close contacts with the mujaheddin groups, and they estimate only 30 percent of the money Congress appropriated for arms from fiscal 1980 through 1984 reached the freedom fighters in the field.

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